



# THE GRAPEVINE

VOL. 5  
ISSUE #4

U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL  
OKINAWA, JAPAN

A CONTINUING TRADITION OF  
SERVING WITH COMPASSION AND CARE

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Photo: The U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Color Guard forms up to present the colors at the Japanese Intern Graduation Ceremony Mar. 21. (Photo by Mass Communications Specialist 3rd Class William G. McCann/RELEASED)



# Notes from the CO's Desk: Culture of Safety

Captain Anne M. Swap, Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

**T**he command philosophy highlights leadership, teamwork and the delivery of quality care. I remind you that leadership does involve taking care of your shipmate, your staff, your family and yourself. "We work as a team" is not just a bumper sticker health care delivery is a team sport and in order to accomplish our mission we must work as a totally committed team with a single focus - providing optimal care.

We need to foster a climate of dignity and mutual respect. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I ask that you think safety prior to every action, holding each other accountable. Our patients trust us to give them our very best. We need to give each other our very best every day and constantly seek ways to improve the care and services we deliver.

The Surgeon General has embarked all of us on a "culture of safety" journey. Part of the journey includes an initiative of staff interviews to be completed monthly by our Patient Safety Manager, Ms. Myrna Seiter. Some of the questions she will ask you include:

- *Do you feel like mistakes will be held against you?*



- *When an event is reported, does it feel like you are being written up, not the problem?*
- *Do you speak up freely if you see something that may negatively affect patient care?*

There are more questions, but you get the idea. The replies are reported monthly to BUMED for the sole purpose of understanding our current culture.

The interview/survey I describe above does not create "quality" nor does it make us safe - it only assesses the current environment and perhaps raises awareness. W. Edward Deming said that "quality is everyone's

responsibility". We can't fully attain a "culture of safety" without everyone on board. How do we get everyone on the same page? In my opinion, we support each other, we teach/coach each other, we ensure that we know and trust that our standard operating procedures (SOPs) are up to date and more importantly, being followed. We ensure that our competencies are being evaluated and are good to go.

On May 6th, we will host a Quality Fair. There will be several activities that day to pause and educate on the culture of safety. All departments are encouraged to submit their process improvement projects in a poster or portfolio format to be displayed at the Fair.

"Quality is never an accident...it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives" (William A. Foster).

We have to be willing to walk the talk when it comes to quality and safety. I believe that this staff wants to and does do the right thing. We will optimize a "culture of safety" if we treat each other with dignity and respect and we are transparent about our processes.

## MCCS Okinawa TOURS+ Upcoming Highlights

### Local Tours

- Okinawa World & Habu Museum, May 3
- Pineapple & Neo Park, May 4
- Naha Dragon Boat Races, May 5
- Urashima Dinner Theater, May 9
- Sub-ship & lunch buffet at Nest Hotel, May 11
- Karyushi Hotel dinner buffet, May 16
- Expo Park & Churaumi Aquarium, May 17
- Battle Sites Tour, May 10, 18
- Yanbaru Mangrove Kayaking, May 18
- Kerama snorkeling trip, May 24

### Off Island Tours

- Tokyo Disneyland, May 22-26
- Hiroshima, May 23-26
- China, May 24-28
- Australia, June 29-July 26
- Climb Mt. Fuji, July 5-9, 8-12, 16-20, 23-27, July 30-Aug 3, Aug. 6-10, 13-17, 17-21

*The TOURS+ office at USNHO, located near the Chaplain's office, is now open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Call 646-7013 (or the main office at 646-3502) for more information.*

# Chaps: The truth is absolute, not relative

Lieutenant Commander Benny L. Mathis, Command Chaplain, U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

This is one of my favorite lines as I read the Easter story of Jesus. Pilate, the Roman appointed governor of Judah, has been handed the extremely difficult task of maintaining order in a very tumultuous location. He sought to stay out of the local religious affairs but on this day, he was forced to make a judgment on a local prophet named Jesus.

The religious rulers claimed that Jesus disturbed the peace and encouraged people to follow himself rather than Caesar. Pilate could tell that this man was being set up for the death sentence. He examined Jesus and found no fault with him. He desired to release him but was politically trapped and was being forced to condemn an innocent man. During the questioning, Jesus admitted "I was born to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Pilate, under pressure, responds "What is truth?"

Like Pilate, at times we get offered differing "truths" and it can be frustrating trying to sort them out. We all expect the truth when we receive treatment from a doctor, repairs from a mechanic, advice from an investor, or are investigating who broke mom's favorite vase at home. The truth helps us to deal with the heart of the matter and allow us to better ourselves and the situation. None of us would welcome or excuse a lie in these areas because it would cost us more in the long run and foster distrust in these relationships. Some people disregard the Golden Rule for the short term benefits that a lie can bring them. They



may not lie outright but may rather cloud the truth or spread half-truths. To soothe their conscience they justify their actions by claiming that all truth is relative and that there are no absolute truths: "what is true for you may not be true for me." The problem with this is that it too is a claim of an absolute truth because it says "all truth is relative." So, if it was true, it couldn't always be true. It undermines its own veracity. It fails in application too: for example, if your get caught speeding, tell PMO that his truth is merely one truth and that you have your own truth. You will still be ticketed.

I argue that truths are always absolute because truths correspond to facts and reality. Since reality does not change so truths cannot change. Like gravity before Isaac Newton sat down under an apple tree, truths exist regardless of our acknowledgement. Truths are also true regardless of current beliefs, opinions or popularity. For a time, humanity believed that the earth was flat. Re-

gardless of this, the earth was truly a sphere. Thanks to some ancient astronomers, mathematicians and most recently NASA, we discovered the truth and even have pictures to prove it. Since humanity has accepted this truth, we no longer fear falling off the earth when we sail.

As you wrestle with "What is truth", I hope that you, like many brave people in history, will reject both the internal and external pressures to lie or ignore the truth. Instead, seek earnestly after the truth and live your life by it. Even if it brings negative consequences in the short term, the long term benefits cannot be outweighed. So, let us continue our commitment to truth and being known as people with integrity and honor.

## The Grapevine

An authorized command publication of U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan

**Capt. Anne M. Swap, MSC, USN**  
Commanding Officer

**Capt. Rick Freedman, DC, USN**  
Executive Officer

**CMDCM Christopher L. Hill, USN**  
Command Master Chief

**Mr. Brian J. Davis**  
Public Affairs Officer

**Ms. Kiyomi Williams**  
Community Relations Specialist

**MC3 William G. McCann**  
Writer/Photographer

**HM3 Jason James**  
Photographer

**Ms. Christine Peterson**  
Photography/Graphics

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U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa  
Public Affairs Office  
PSC 482  
FPO AP 96362  
DSN 643-7294  
nhokipao@med.navy.mil

Visit our home page at:  
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nhoki>

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[www.facebook.com/usnho](http://www.facebook.com/usnho)

## Got News?

If you have an event you would like covered, email us or give us a call at 646-7024. Send in your news, photos and stories to the USNH Okinawa Public Affairs Office at [nhokipao@med.navy.mil](mailto:nhokipao@med.navy.mil).



# Communication, collaboration, & teamwork

Ms. Myrna Seiter, U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Patient Safety Manager

It's been a little over a year since our new facility opened up its doors to staff and patients, and we have now become settled down in our work routines and daily activities. However, this does not mean that we should become complacent about our own performance. When we think about how we perform our work, and go about our tasks, we should keep in mind that we do not provide healthcare in isolation. We are part of a team of healthcare providers, and as members of the team, we should be aware of how we communicate with our health care partners.

A study published in the Postgraduate Medical Journal (volume 90, issue 1061, January 2014) explains that changes in modern healthcare delivery are not matched by changes in the systems for communication across disciplines. The authors further explain the characteristics of an effective team, from leadership to performance monitoring, from mutual trust to shared mental models, and all the other components we learn about in Team-STEPPS, factors that influence failures in communication, as well as a guide to possible tools that healthcare teams can utilize to overcome communication barriers.

Not surprisingly, challenges seem more apparent when a patient is transferred from one ward to another or between primary and secondary care in high acuity settings

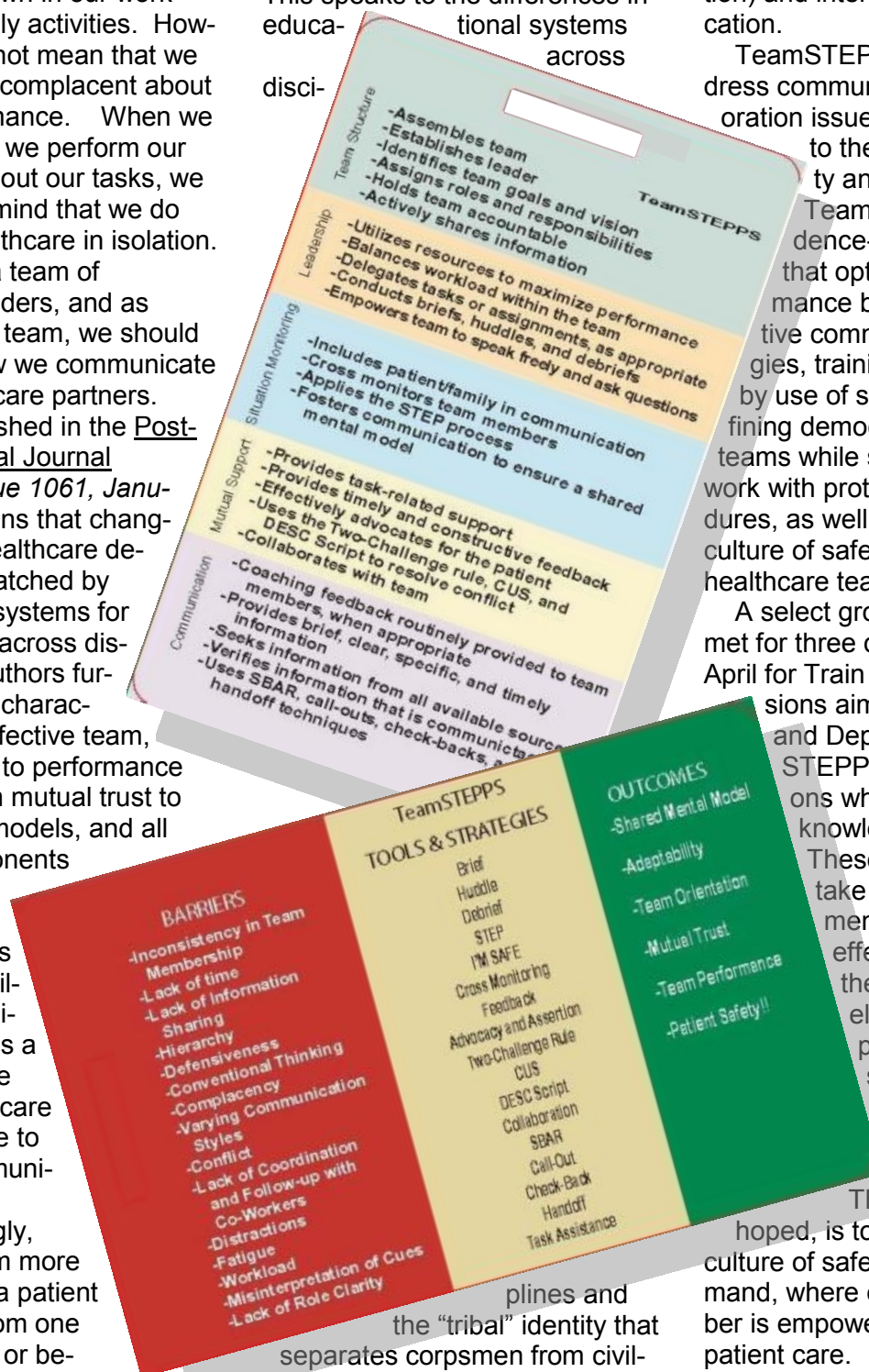
such as the emergency department and the operating room, handovers during shift changes, and between nurses and doctors. This speaks to the differences in educational systems across disciplines

in organizational factors that contribute to the *silo effect* (lack of information flowing between groups or parts of an organization) and interfere with communication.

TeamSTEPPS strategies address communication and collaboration issues that are essential to the provision of quality and safe patient care. TeamSTEPPS is an evidence-based program that optimizes performance by teaching effective communication strategies, training teams together by use of simulation, and defining democratic and inclusive teams while supporting teamwork with protocols and procedures, as well as developing a culture of safety in support of healthcare teams.

A select group of shipmates met for three days at the end of April for Train the Trainer sessions aimed at Directorate and Departmental Team-STEPPS to form champions who will bring their knowledge to the deck. These champions will take the lead in implementing strategies for effective teamwork at the departmental level, teaching their departments tools such as SBAR, Hand-offs, the two challenge rule, and call-outs.

The end result, it is hoped, is to firmly establish a culture of safety within the command, where every team member is empowered to deliver safer patient care.



plines and the "tribal" identity that separates corpsmen from civilians, and nurses from doctors. Challenges are apparent as well

# USNH Okinawa kudos and best practices

U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Command Evaluation Department

**R**ecently the hospital completed a Navy Medicine West MEDIG assist visit to evaluate our programs in preparation for the next inspection. The inspectors' final report included a number of kudos and best practices for our staff. Here are a few:

**Kudos:** to Mr. Patrie for his extremely professional and highly competent performance of his multiple command functions. He is a great asset to Navy Medicine.

**Kudos/Best Practice:** The Staff Education and Training Department should be commended for having a very proactive approach to ensure all newly reporting members are up to date on their training requirements. Once reported, their training records are assessed for any missing requirements. Members are required to complete all required training prior to being released to their department.

**Kudos:** Lt. Varney and HM1 Nunez have moved the AT Program forward exponentially since their arrival and are on track for an excellent MEDIG Inspection...

**Kudos:** Code Pink Response: Command leadership is highly engaged on this topic, as is Mr. Randall Stallings who is currently working with the NH Okinawa team to implement a new Code Pink Response.

**Kudos:** HM1 Nunez demonstrated an excellent aptitude for the risk management process and he was able to quickly learn how use the required matrices.

**Kudos:** The new Key and Lock system installed throughout the hospital is excellent and, moving forward, should be a system worth exploring for implementation at all MTFs. Also, the key and access control to the scheduled narcotics stored by NH Okinawa was excellent.

**Best Practice(s):** Materials Management Program: Organized, complete and thorough administrative records are maintained. LCDR Mutuc should be commended for his management approach, his teaching and communication style, and fostering of a team environment.

**Best Practice(s):** Special recognition goes to Mr. Marcus Jones for his use of electronic files for each equipment folder. It is evident that an extraordinary amount of effort has been performed creating and maintaining this database.

**Best Practice(s):** Equipment Maintenance Program: Use of Customer Service Work orders in DMLSS. This is a function that is available in DMLSS and not utilized by most commands. Noted that this has been in place and has realized efficiencies in the work order flow and tracking.

**Best Practice(s):** Purchase Card/ Acquisitions Program: Special commendation is provided to Lt. Cmdr. Mutuc regarding their outstanding program and professionalism.

**Best Practice:** Suicide Prevention Program: Lt. Cmdr. Braybrook has implemented a fantastic program called Mental Health Response Team.

## Sailors of the Quarter

The U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Sailors of the Quarter (SOQ) were recognized at a command ceremony April 25 on the Topside Terrace.

Pictured, from left: CMDCM Christopher Hill, USNHO Command Master Chief; Hospitalman Ivan Carreno of Nogales, Ariz. - Bluejacket of the Quarter; Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Javier Flores of Sanger, Cal. - Junior Sailor of the Quarter; Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Sondra Zickmund of Thomas, W. Va. - Senior Sailor of the Quarter.



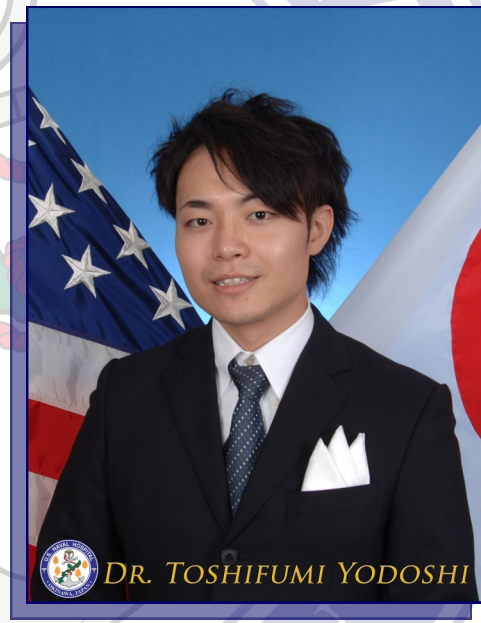
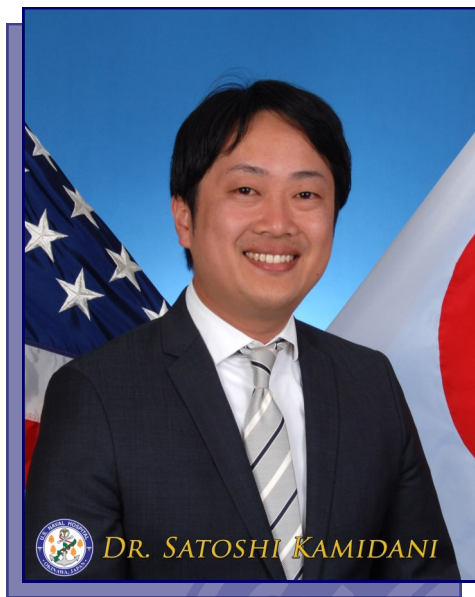


## 2013-2014 JAPANESE INTERN GRADUATION





# USNHO JAPANESE INTERN CLASS OF 2014—2015



# (N)ICE Comments from Our Patients

*ICE comments from our patients courtesy of Mr. Frank Robertson, U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Customer Relations Officer*

**MS Heredia** is a very sweet, knowledgeable person! It was a delightful and informative visit. Thanks!

**Ms. Uechi** was very professional and understanding and made my experience pleasant.

I would like to thank **Ms. Baker** for her professionalism and thorough care in dealing with me as my case manager. I was guided by her every step of the way with my condition. She always made me feel as if she had my best interest at heart. I don't believe there is anyone else that could top her excellent service. Thank you Ms. Baker!

**Cmdr. Prieto** is an absolutely incredible Medical Professional. Excellent bedside manner and very knowledgeable. She puts parents at ease and explains diagnosis simple and concise. She is AWE-SOME!



**Dr. James Marron**

**Dr. Marron** was my medical provider and was very professional and educational.

**Mrs. Herman** and **Lt. j.g. Schwartz** designed and provided a Parent Workshop for the Kinser Elementary School Sure Start Program. Both OT's presented relative topics, hands on demonstrations and answered individual parent concerns. The workshop was excellent. I commend both of the OT's for providing a much needed service to our parents. Thank you.

Staff was very helpful during our child's visit at the NICU, especially **Capt. Haney**. She was very helpful and she always went the extra mile for the comfort

and wellbeing of my child.



**Lt. Courtney Lennon**

I just wanted to take a moment and say that I am grateful for **Lt. C. Lennon**. She was so sweet with my daughter and did a great job of making her feel comfortable as she was very nervous for her check-up today. She was so warm and caring and I appreciate everything she did today!

**Dr. Goff** is an amazing anesthesiologist. My [surgical procedure] could not have gone better. I appreciate his professionalism and for keeping me calm during the surgery.

In Pediatrics, my [children] saw **Lt. Cabrera**. He was phenomenal!

The Radiology Department has excellent patient service, especially **HM2 Mangubat** who is very polite and informative about the procedures.

**Lt. Cmdr. Ableman** and his staff were amazing! They were kind and really made me feel better. his equipment was very useful in diagnosing my eye care. Wonderful experience!

I really felt that **HMCS Porter** cared about everything and was committed to his job and the best outcome for me to be successful.

**HN Lopez** was amazing. I am scared of getting blood taken, and he talked me through it as well as getting the vein on the first try. He was quick and incredibly courteous. Thanks, Lopez!



# (N)ICE Comments from Our Patients

ICE comments from our patients courtesy of Mr. Frank Robertson, U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Customer Relations Officer

Bob Hope is a very busy school with a high number of students receiving special education services. We have worked closely with **Lt. Parkes** this year with initial evaluations, informal observations, and direct/indirect Occupational Therapy services. Lt. Parkes has demonstrated outstanding communication and professionalism with our team. Also, she has built a rapport that has developed a strong relationship, not only with her, but with the entire EDIS organization. The CSC team at Bob Hope is very appreciative of the hard work and commitment Lt. Parkes has continually showed. Thank you Melissa!

**Lt. Cmdr. Share** and his staff provided outstanding assistance as I navigated treatment options/requirements after HQSVBN migrated to New Hosp.

My wife and I were totally satisfied with **Lt. Cmdr. Brink's** consultation. He is always courteous, attentive, and we believe he always has the patient's interest as a high priority.

**Lt. Ehram** is an amazing provider. She went way above the call of duty. She was extremely thorough and treated me like a patient and not just another number.



**HM3 Samantha Blankenship**

I recently had a procedure done at the USNHO Pain Clinic where I received EXEMPLARY care. **HM3 Blankenship** was absolutely AMAZING! She made the whole procedure run smoothly and took time to actually check on me during the procedure. It really struck a chord with me that she asked if I was okay and showed true concern. Beyond amazing and I am deeply grateful for that.

**Ms. Whitt** from Immunizations was very helpful in

organizing by family's AHLTA and immunization records. Thank you.

**Mr. Breshike** was very helpful. He took the extra time to go above and beyond what he needed to do. I would give him a perfect review.



**HM2 Winnie Zhang**

**HM2 Zhang** does the U. S. Navy and the USNH proud with her sharp professionalism and customer-friendly attitude. She addressed all my concerns and took the time to double-check information and get back to me at warp speed.

**PS2 Reyes** went above and beyond providing excellent patient assistance.

This was my first apt and already feel 1000 times better! **Cmdr. Duff** is awesome! So glad I came.

We (MMD) were setting up for an event on the 4th floor terrace. **HM3 Pinelli and HM1 Reid** happened to be walking by on their own mission. They asked what we were setting up for, and immediately provided assistance without hesitation or asking if we needed any assistance. Please recognize these outstanding individuals for offering to lend a hand. They reminded us that we are one command, with one mission; not individual departments that have to work together. We (MMD) felt like part of a community of neighbors. Please make sure HM3 and HM1's leadership know we are truly grateful. !

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Some of the ICE comments used in this article may have been edited for space and to ensure patient privacy.*

## CPO 365 EASTER BUNNY VISIT





# MASS CASUALTY EXERCISE



INVOLVED  
BUT NO APPARENT INJURIES

4

4

INVOLVED  
BUT NO APPARENT INJURIES



## *Events & Milestones*



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kowalskee Saguin cuts cake at the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society Kick Off ceremony. (Photo by MC3 William McCann)



Newly promoted Lt. Shantel Davis poses with her husband Nathaniel. After her promotion, Davis read the oath to commission Nathaniel on to active duty as an MSC officer. (Photo by HM3 Jason James)



Captain Rich Hayden and Hospital Corpsman Megan Gomes cut cake at the 2014 Laboratory Technician cake cutting ceremony. (Photo by MC3 William McCann).



Lieutenant Commander Lorelie Flinn has the shoulder boards of her new rank put on by her son Braden during her promotion ceremony. (Photo by MC3 William McCann)



Airman 1st Class Rudyar Burgos from USNHO's NICU receives the "Sailor of the Month" award. (Photo by MC3 William McCann)